



# Blue Ridge Outdoor Education Center

237 Camp Mikell Ct, Toccoa, GA 30577

706.886.7621

blueridge@windstream.net

www.blueridgeoec.com

*Experiential Environmental Education*

Dear Teacher,

We at Blue Ridge are looking forward to meeting you and your students! We are always updating our information, so even if you are a seasoned veteran of the program, please read on to see what changes to expect.

Even after you have arrived with your students and the mounds of paperwork, your job is *STILL* not finished. Although we do not require you to teach any of the classes, we encourage your participation in the classes. This type of outdoor experiential education offers unique opportunities for students and teachers to interact and to see each other in an educational environment outside of the classroom. The example you set is crucial.

For safety reasons, we require at least one adult (Blue Ridge staff, teacher, or chaperone) to be with the students at all times, that is, with groups in the field, in each cabin, and at each meal table. Blue Ridge staff is responsible for students during classes; teachers and chaperones are responsible for all other times. Everyone's help is appreciated in the dining hall. We are continuing to use small blocks of *TRANSITION TIME* after lunch and after dinner to allow for bathroom breaks, clothes changing, etc. You and your chaperones are responsible for students during these times, as well as during the *RECREATION TIME* before dinner.

Before and after your arrival, feel free to communicate any problems, concerns, or observations to the Blue Ridge staff. We're friendly folks and we have found that open and clear communication helps the program to run smoothly for everyone.

## Reservation Policy

Telephone reservations will be confirmed upon receipt of the reservation contract and your deposit, which is 20% of the estimated total cost for your group. Please send only one check for your deposit, and bring only one check for the remaining balance. The contract and deposit must be returned within 15 days. If you anticipate a problem meeting this requirement, please contact us immediately. We will work with you in every way possible to make your program a reality.

Please note the chaperone policy: For every 10 students you are allowed one chaperone at no charge (i.e.: 64 students equal 6 free chaperones; 65 students equal 7 free chaperones). Any additional chaperones will be charged at the full program rate.

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### Preparing for your trip:

Students who are mentally prepared for their trip to Blue Ridge will get more out of their time here. If your students are already familiar with a few basic concepts (such as ecosystems, habitats, adaptations, and food chains) they will be able to apply these concepts to what they experience here. Please refer to the Pre & Post Visit Activities Folder for ideas. Also, print the pages in the Journal Pages folder for the classes that your students will be taking. Make copies for each student. It will help them to understand and appreciate the wonderful systems and processes of the natural world, evident in the land around Blue Ridge.

Parents' and Chaperones' Letters - Send information early to parents and chaperones, allowing plenty of time for their response.

### Group Assignments:

Please divide your students into the following groupings:

- Field groups -- Field groups function as classes during instructional periods and should consist of 10 - 15 students and one adult. Contact us at [blueridge@windstream.net](mailto:blueridge@windstream.net) to find out how many field groups you will need. You can give them animal or plant names to add interest for the students (e.g. Screech Owls, Salamanders...be creative!).
- Cabin groups -- Each cabin sleeps 12 students and 1 adult. Claiborne and Stephens dormitories both have a commons area with one or two extra beds to be used only if absolutely necessary. Different schools will not be mixed in cabins.

Careful planning of these group assignments can avoid potential problems and enhance your students' experience at Blue Ridge. Social interaction can be encouraged by combining different students in different groups. Boys and girls should be mixed in field groups. Make sure each student knows his or her field and cabin groups. We encourage you to have the students make name tags with their two groups written on them before they come to Blue Ridge. Please have the cabin and field group lists with you when you arrive.

### Additional Teacher Responsibilities:

The following medical responsibilities are for teachers only.

Please alphabetize the "Health Forms" and "Release Forms" before your arrival at Blue Ridge. Check to make sure all the forms are signed and filled out completely. We cannot accept a student whose forms are incomplete.

Please put a red X on the upper right hand corner of the medical forms of to students who have asthma, diabetes, seizure history, need of a special diet, insect allergies, or any other unusual restrictions or medical needs.

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### Other Preparations

Birthdays - If you inform us about a birthday occurring during your stay here, we will arrange a small observance including a hearty song and a treat!

We encourage you to begin your preparations early. Allow plenty of time for parents to return the forms you send them. Build the anticipation and readiness of your students. We know all this information sounds daunting, but we have good reason to believe that it is all well worth the effort. And feel free to call if you encounter any difficulties or need further information.

Sincerely,

Matt Wagner  
Program Director

PS Be aware that your cell phone will probably not get reception at Blue Ridge and there are no computer facilities available. We do have wireless in the office lobby. Anyone bringing a laptop is assuming the risk for that equipment. We strongly recommend that ALL such equipment be left at home!